

THE ATTEMPTED

MURDER

OF

PRINT

A MODERN DAY MARKETING
MYSTERY!

THE FABUL



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'REPORTS OF MY DEATH ARE GREATLY EXAGGERATED' ¹



Print's alleged demise occurred within the crumple zone of the 2007-2008 financial crash and the rapid rise of digital marketing.

In 2008, UK search ad spend was worth **£1.94 billion**; in 2024, it's around **£13 billion**². Whilst UK print advertising spend has fallen from **£6.4 billion**² to around **£1.3 billion**³ during the same period.

And yet, print lives on. Consumers want and need to feel a brand experience under their fingertips, especially for Big Ticket Items. There's growing awareness around digital detoxing. Digital marketing can be expensive, competitive and complex.

Print remains a powerhouse. It has strengths other channels don't. It can go where digital cannot. It's resilient, it's ever-evolving and it's thriving. Leading brands are showing how digital and print can work together successfully. Let's see why.

But first - some recriminations... read on!

¹ Mark Twain, famously misquoted, and famous worldwide, thanks to print.

² [Search ad spend UK 2022 | Statista](#)

³ [Print advertising spending in the UK 2007-2019 | Statista](#)

"Print advertising in the UK is experiencing a resurgence, with brands leveraging traditional mediums to enhance brand visibility and consumer engagement."

- Statista, [Print Advertising UK - Market Forecast](#)

"... there are signs that the printing presses may roll for some time to come."

- The Times, [Why print media is coming back from the dead](#)

A CONSPIRACY!

Anecdotally, we know that the new kid on the block, digital marketing, encouraged everyone to believe that print was on its knees, if not dead.

These henchmen (and women) of search engines jumped into this new sector and its associated revenue streams. Every business, they said, needs a website, Facebook page, SEO, PPC, ABC, XYZ ...

Our human brains are wired to like shiny new things (A.K.A. innovation), possibly as much as they're wired to like stories. Nobody wants to be left behind. Everybody wants Big Data at their fingertips.

In this way, marketing budgets were spent on pixels, while strategies became hyper focused on easy routes and quick wins. In fact, in businesses where budgets were not increased to accommodate the new technology, marketing became not just **Digital First**, but **Digital Only**. #IntegratedMarketingRIP



WHODUNIT?

Was it the financial crash? Was it **Google**, with an algorithm in the library? Was print simply *too old*?

History suggests it fell victim (*or did it?*) to a confluence of events, one of which was the evolution and rise to power of digital technology.

Let's look at the evidence...



THE EVIDENCE



- 1943** - The Colossus - the first programmable digital computer, is built.
- 1951** - UNIVAC I becomes the first commercially available computer.
- 1969** - ARPANET is created, allowing multiple computers to communicate.
- 1975** - The first personal computer, the Altair 8800, is launched.
- 1983** - DNS, the Domain Name System, is launched.
- 1989** - Sir Tim Berners-Lee shares www technology with the world.
- 1991** - The first website is launched.
- 1998** - Google is founded, revolutionising search engines.
- 1999** - The new Nokia 7110 allows limited internet browsing.
- 2000** - Broadband launches in the UK. AdWords launches to the world.
- 2003** - MySpace is launched, having a huge influence on pop culture.
- 2004** - Facebook is launched, marking the rise of social media.
- 2007** - Apple launches the first iPhone, popularising smartphones.
- 2014** - Amazon launches Alexa, bringing AI assistants into homes.
- 2020** - GPT-3 is released - a state-of-the-art language model by OPEN AI
- 2024** - Ongoing improvements to AI

**“WE CAN
ARRANGE
SUCH FACTS
AS WE HAVE
WITH ORDER
AND METHOD”**

* Hercule Poirot (Murder on the Orient Express, Agatha Christie)

1990 - THE ARCHIE SEARCH ENGINE IS CREATED AS A DATABASE, ALLOWING COMPANIES TO EFFECTIVELY TRACK CUSTOMER INFORMATION. THE TERM 'DIGITAL MARKETING' IS COINED SOON AFTER.

PRINT'S NOT DEAD



Print is old, but it's far from old fashioned. Its legacy is innovation. For centuries, its technological advances placed it at the epicentre of historical events.

Print is versatile, beautiful and cost-effective, and has earned its place in any integrated marketing strategy. There is almost always a print format suited to the needs of your target audience.

This format could be a magazine, a billboard, flyer, poster or direct mail. It might be all of these, or just one, or something else.

It could be a standalone one-shot (promoting a sale), or part of a wider campaign that includes events, website content, social media video, radio advertising.

No matter how hard they try to deface the billboards, rip up the posters, or distract the postman from his daily round - those digital donuts have had no luck in their plotting so far. Print continues to live alongside the influencers, socials, and AI chatbots, and it always will.

“Direct Mail provides cut through,
but we actually see it work well
in support of other channels -
email, social and mobile. We don't
think it is an either / or.
Integrated communications are
key.”

“For B2B sales, [print] typically
provides more cut through - send
someone something different and it
makes you stand out vs 'another'
email that lands in an inbox.”

- businesses responding to a fabl poll

THE TRUTH BEHIND THE TROLLING



Print fills gaps in our experience of a brand and its services or products. It goes places that other media cannot and pulls its weight admirably.

Brand awareness

Experts say **7** is the number of times someone needs to see your brand before they bite. Print helps keep brands front of mind when it's time to make a decision. Best are memorable interactions - and in a digitally saturated world, print is uniquely memorable.

Brand equity

Marketing that can be held and handled has impact. If it looks great, is full of interest and entertainment, and feels valuable, even more so. Particular brochures are coveted for their 'coffee table aesthetic' - beautiful designs on gorgeous papers, in some cases so impactful they can elevate a brand to 'legendary'.

Staying power

Whether it's delivered to the door or picked up in-store, printed marketing materials make themselves at home. Direct Mail stays around for up to 17 days. A catalogue for a big ticket item (kitchens, weddings) might be saved for months if the buying cycle is quite long.

Print fills gaps in our experience of a brand and its services or products. It goes places that other media can not and pulls its weight admirably.

IKR. Literally crying. Can't believe it's over.

But is it? They haven't found a body ...

LOVED AND HATED



Print provides reassurance for Big Ticket Items, where people want to take their time, have a sensory experience, and feel like they are building a trusted relationship.

Having something to hold feels real, in a way that digital content is not. Print magazines, brochures and catalogues are immensely popular.

Direct mail, on the other hand, prompts mixed and sometimes strong feelings. In the past it was often thought of as the mainstay of local takeaways, taxi firms and roofing firms - crumpled trifold in eye-catching colours!

In actual fact, exquisite, high end direct mailers created for premium brands really pull their weight.

"I like to read print and it's nice to flick through a brochure or a magazine. I'll often pick up an eye-catching flier from a pile at a pub or a shop."

"Direct mail is all well and good if you're into whatever they're sending you but is annoying otherwise."

- consumers responding to a fabl poll

‘IT IS NOT THE PAST THAT MATTERS, BUT THE FUTURE’ *



You know and we know that the reports of print's demise are greatly exaggerated. We have theories about how and why it happened. We also know some of its history, its strengths and its popularity.

There's no doubt that marketing has changed, but so has print. Some people know this already. You know this already.

Others do not know. This is a problem if they're holding the purse strings. So, if you need proof of print's value, in order to defend and champion it, this next section is for you.

The bottom line is: **digital marketing**, **websites**, **emails** and **social media** don't replace print like-for-like.

Each does a job, each is part of a story, each has its strengths and weaknesses, and each deserves a fair share of the marketing budget.

You're not fooling anyone. I know that you know that I know that you know where the bodies are buried.

???

IS PRINT DEAD?

Are you kidding?

I KNEW IT!

Don't worry. Print's fine.

What??? Conspiracy!!!

Yes. Yes it was.

* Hercule Poirot (Death on the Nile, Agatha Christie)

PRINT POWER



Magazines - brand magazines - remain one of the most powerful and cost-effective marketing tools available to brands. Consumers can't get enough of them.

- Magazine readership has steadily increased over the last decade. **Subscriptions** (print and digital) grew in 2023 and average revenue per reader is up¹.
- Readers "love the **feel** of turning pages in their hands"² and everyone knows someone who loves the **smell** of a new magazine!
- If you think print is enjoyed by older generations, think again: seven out of 10 **millennials** (born 1981-1996) read print magazines for leisure and entertainment³.
- Print is perfectly positioned to take advantage of the "**digital detox**" trend, as people spend more time away from devices and notifications⁴.
- Advertisers are showing interest in the **impact** of print and how it interacts with parts of the brain. Consumers often find magazine ads less "intrusive"⁵.

¹ [Tech giants have gutted publishing. Now digital fatigue is giving print a new lease on life | Fortune](#)

² [Book sales are up: this is what we've been reading during the pandemic](#)

³ [Is reading a printed magazine good for you?](#)

⁴ [How to quit your tech: a beginner's guide to divorcing your phone | Mobile phones | The Guardian](#)

⁵ [Tech giants have gutted publishing. Now digital fatigue is giving print a new lease on life | Fortune](#)

"It's fun to
browse and
dream."

- consumers responding to a fabl poll

'HOLMES, CONSUMER DATA SHOWS A REAL PAGE TURNER!' *

Campaigns that include mail are

52%

more likely to report **ROI** effects and **43%**
more likely to report revenue uplifts

[Marketreach](#)

Print advertising

drives higher levels of brand recall

78% vs 40%

for digital ads

[Newsworks 2024](#)

61%

of people

buy a product

once they've seen it in a brochure

[Bentley University](#)

61%

of brochure recipients

visit

the company's website

[USPS](#)

Marketing campaigns

are

400%

more effective when print and digital
are combined

[Top Media Advertising](#)

56%

of people believe

that printed marketing is the

most trustworthy

form of communication

[Data & Marketing Association](#)

* Never said ever

‘THE IMPACT OF PRINT IS ELEMENTARY, MY DEAR WATSON’ *



81%

of magazine readers

have bought an item

or visited a place after reading about it

[British Print](#)

Magazine advertising

in the UK is experiencing a

resurgence

as brands use targeted, quality content
to reach niche audiences effectively

[Statista](#)

82%

of customers

trust print advertising

the most when making a purchase

[Marketing Sherpa](#)

Full payback on print ROI

between 2021-23 was an impressive

£6.36

Print gave best short-term ROI of £2.74 per £1 spent

[Marketing Week](#)

Print adverts

give a recall of

78%

whereas digital ad recall is only 30%

[Newsworks](#)

Print advertising uses

21% less

cognitive function

than digital - making it more memorable

[Persuasion Nation](#)

* Ditto

POLL: 'HOW I MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT WHAT TO BUY'



In the autumn of 2024, we polled consumers to ask this question about large purchases in the last 12 months and, as a bonus, their thoughts on print magazines and direct mail.

All had bought a **kitchen, bathroom, holiday, property** or other large purchase in the last year. There was a fairly even split across age groups from 18 to 65+.

Respondents used a combination of **websites, showrooms, social media** and **brochures** while they were making a decision.

Brochures and websites acted as the research and inspiration phase; consumers liked physically being in a showroom and touching the displays. Social media was very much used as a reputation-checker.

"Important when spending a large amount for it to be worth it and feel safe in doing so. So brand reputation really helps."

"Social Media helped me check other people's experiences with the product."

"You can read technical specs, get ideas on how to use a product, see colour options, and understand how the product might fit into your life."

- consumers responding to a fabl poll

POLL: CONSUMER OPINIONS OF PRINT



Free brand magazines and brochures can feel like expensive coffee table books or travel companions. They provide a broad brand experience that isn't restricted by a smartphone screen.

- 69.2% had taken a printed brochure or catalogue home with them in the last year.
- Of these, 57% kept it for between 2 and 6 months; 21% kept it for 9 months or more.
- Of these, 45% browsed it 2-3 times and 20% browsed it 5-6 times.
- 61.5% had read at least one item of direct mail in the last year.
- Of these, 64.7% had read between 2-8 pieces and 11.8% read up to 20 items.
- 44% of people who picked up a free supermarket magazine used the recipes.
- 57.7% of people were impressed if a magazine, brochure or direct mail was printed sustainably.

"If I have magazines I like or have paid for I usually keep them - I don't recycle ones that are well designed, so stand out on the shelf, appeal to me and have a range of content that you can easily dip in and out."

"I like having something tangible to browse through. It becomes very monotonous scrolling online."

- consumers responding to a fabl poll

TARGET YOUR DEMOGRAPHIC



Print technology is a world away from 15th century movable type. More choice, unlimited creativity, better targeting, more opportunities to enhance brand equity and loyalty.

Niche audiences

It's easy to get your magazine, brochure, catalogue or direct mailer in front of the people who most want or need it. For example, customers can pick up a magazine in-store, or it can be posted to those who are subscribed to a loyalty programme.

The personal touch

Personalisation is attention-catching and provides an individual with the right information or product. You can connect with them through their interests, requirements, and values & beliefs. It shouldn't be overused - some might find it clumsy or creepy in the wrong context...

Design freedom

Digital platforms have design limitations. The complexity of a visually impactful website can hamper performance and give your audience a disappointing experience. Print has simpler requirements, meaning you have complete creative control and freedom of expression.



COST & VALUE

Because even the humble printed magazine, brochure or clever direct mailer feels like a premium product, it's a common worry that it will be too expensive.

It's an investment into your brand, for sure - but print won't bust your budget and you can achieve an impressive ROI.

Print

- Cost efficiency
- Minimal waste
- AI-optimised workflows
- Easy personalisation
- Speed using POD
- Innovative, creative
- More sustainable options

Paper

- Cardstock - thick, durable, flexible
- Recycled - 60 - 100% reused pulp
- FSC - sustainably managed
- Uncoated - textured to the touch
- Matte - a light, smoothing coating
- Gloss - coated, shiny
- Silk - coated, a slight sheen



Magazines can pay for their own production through partner advertising or by applying a cover price.

(The production costs include content writing, graphic design and layout, photography, project management, and so on.)

You might also decide to repurpose the magazine and / or its assets, which would increase its ROI.

For example, its digital format can be distributed cheaply and widely, via email or social media, supporting growth of the customer base and attracting advertisers.

Is it really this simple?

Put it this way: the most influential, highest circulation B2C print magazines in the UK right now are those published by supermarkets. Tesco, ASDA and Waitrose occupy the top spots. All the other supermarkets do it too and there's a reason: it's good for business.

Print publications average circulation per issue 2023	
Tesco Magazine	1,500,520
ASDA Magazine	1,000,000
Waitrose & Partners Food	667,204
The Economist	503,072
Good Housekeeping	364,870
Take a Break	271,837

NEW TECHNOLOGIES & OPPORTUNITIES

Tips for using print in your **marketing strategy**:

- Integrate marketing across your digital and traditional channels for optimal results.
- Take customers offline and bring them online. Use QR codes, which will help measure engagement.
- Use personalisation and customisable options discerningly and innovatively.
- Cut lead times with print on demand - but plan ahead using offset litho for luxury assets.
- Work with a creative agency that understands the potential for print technology.
- AI is already driving automation and optimisation of print workflows for speed and accuracy.
- AI is also enabling easier ways to create personalised print assets that maximise engagement.



NEW TECHNOLOGIES & CLIMATE CHANGE



Sustainable print can support your **net zero** policy.

Through technology and innovation, harnessing digital print, AI and improved print has transformed itself.

Consumers are increasingly aware of net zero and sustainability policies. They want to align themselves with brands who care about what they care about. By choosing sustainable print, your brand can move towards your net zero goals.

- FSC certified wood
- Vegetable / biodegradable inks
- Recycled paper
- Uncoated paper
- Energy-efficient processes
- Minimised waste
- Soft proofing

Is digital marketing eco-friendly?

Resources are used to create, send and store digital marketing assets, from emails to e-magazines. Electricity generation in the UK outpaces fossil fuels, which is great. However, every megabyte has an impact and marketing leaders are very conscious of this.

Take Google, which previously claimed to be carbon neutral - following investment into offsetting projects that did not work, it now pledges to be net zero by 2030.

“...average email usage is equivalent to driving a small petrol car for around 128 miles.”

- [Carbon Literacy Trust, The carbon cost of an email: update!](#)

THE FUTURE OF PRINTING

The print sector has always been adventurous at its core - a changemaker, experimental, bold. In a world obsessed with digital, print is matching its pace. It will continue to offer us an increasing range of choices, year on year. Here's where it's taking us.

- **AI** is already having an impact on the speed and accuracy of print services, and helping us harness ways to personalise and target audiences. More understanding about its potential will help this evolve, creating opportunities for brands to foster stronger bonds with customers.
- **Circularity** will gain more traction in the print industry and among partner sectors, to reduce waste and promote recycling. This will be further driven by net zero and regulation, but also by consumers who want businesses to do more. Similarly, technology and new materials and processes will continue to evolve rapidly.
- **Integration** - marketers might still opt for a digital-first approach to campaigns. However, as digital marketing matures and its practitioners seek more holistic strategies, the gap with print will be closed. QR codes are commonly used to bridge this gap. Coming up, we'll be moving between formats to consume content, using technology like augmented reality (AR).



THE FABL



We're a boutique brand marketing agency, and our priority is to get you results. We specialise in helping brands grow through storytelling - or as we call it, **Storygelling**.

Every brand has its own story. How you tell yours is how you'll connect with the right people, in the right place, at the right time. **We'll find your story and make it stick.**

HQ for the fabl is on the beautiful Broughton Hall Estate just outside Skipton. Our lovely office is home to an eclectic team of professionals with the most extraordinary back stories. It's this diversity of experience that makes us the boutique agency that can easily handle the biggest of challenges.

Because when we put our heads together, incredible things happen.

Innovative strategies take shape. Ideas are brought to life. Astounding results are achieved. We're a 'no rules' agency. No meaningless jargon. No one-size-fits-all approach. No over promises. No compromise. We'll challenge the status quo and disrupt when we have to. We tell it straight.

Our priority is making your brand memorable. We are a team of experts who pool our extensive knowledge, experience and forward-thinking ideas to create stunning results. We're proud to do amazing work for many regional organisations and we've a loyal portfolio of national and international clients too.

Thank you

01756 636777

storygellers@thefabl.com

www.thefabl.com

